

The HSUS's Ashley Mauceri holds two malamute puppies rescued from a feces-covered back porch at a Montana puppy mill. The puppies had distended stomachs and were initially scared of responders but calmed quickly in their arms.



LOCATION: Jefferson City, Montana

ANIMALS SAVED: 161 malamutes

The mother-to-be endeared herself to quite a few people that October day.

Rescuers found the dog housed alone in a pen, lethargic and afraid, one of 161 malamutes to be rescued from the mountainside Montana puppy mill. She was “very shy, extremely pregnant, and emaciated,” says Adam Parascandola, who led the HSUS Animal Rescue Team in assisting the Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office and Lewis and Clark Humane Society.

“When I went in to get her, she was very wary. But once I caught her, I was able to pick her up, and she wasn’t snappy, and she turned out to be very sweet. But she didn’t have any body fat or anything to be able to support the population of these puppies, and we were all extremely worried about her.”

Veterinarians helping with the rescue took the dog to their hospital, and she was later placed in foster care.

In late October, she gave birth to puppies who will never know the squalor of that secluded puppy mill, where responders found few traces of adequate food or clean water.

With their high-pitched yelps, malamutes are big talkers, intelligent and energetic. But these were kept in a maze of feces-encrusted pens, often with unneutered males alongside unsprayed females. Many were missing parts of their ears—the result perhaps of frostbite, of fighting for food, of flies and infection.

All this from a well-known breeder who had produced champion show dogs but also generated complaints to local authorities

about the conditions of his dogs. “I think it underscores the importance of folks needing to know where their dogs are coming from,” Parascandola says. “And sometimes, what you see on the Internet is not a real good representation of what’s actually occurring.”

The case also offered a painful reminder of the state’s lack of regulations for large-scale breeding facilities, says Wendy Hergenraeder, HSUS Montana state director. “This was a prime example of why Montana needs this type of law.”



The malamutes languished in squalid pens with dirty water and little food.

LOCATION: Bleecker, N.Y.

ANIMALS HELPED: 71 roosters

In cockfighting circles, it's known as a "drag pit." If the main fight is slowing down or just continuing for too long, organizers will move the dueling roosters to a smaller area in order to start the next fight.

On a rural upstate New York compound in September, the HSUS Animal Rescue Team found evidence of precisely such a pit, surrounded by blood-splattered walls. "It showed that this was maybe a little bit more organized than most people would have thought," says Chris Schindler, HSUS manager of animal fighting investigations.

In all, the team helped New York state police remove 71 roosters from the property, about 55 miles northwest of Albany. Beyond three trailer homes stretched a tiny dirt road leading down to the roosters, some in solitary pens, others in a dilapidated outbuilding believed to house the fights.

Authorities uncovered the deadly sharp metal gaffs that cockfighters fasten to roosters' legs, and in an unusual twist, they also found a school bus parked on the property. The gutted vehicle was being used to house birds. "Certainly, it's always shocking when you find something that is typically associated with such innocence, and they're using it to conduct a criminal activity," Schindler says.

Team members assigned identification numbers, affixed leg bands, and took photos before removing the animals in cardboard carriers to the temporary shelter they'd helped set up. Later, they joined troopers in evaluating evidence.

"Using the cockfighting as a vehicle to arrest these people, they were also able to uncover narcotics and illegal guns," Schindler says.

Schindler believes that with fights being held in plain view of other caged roosters, the birds could easily surmise "something awful happens" when they are snatched out of their pens. And yet, as responders lifted them into their arms, "they instantly settled down, and it just had a calming effect when you held them, especially closely."



"It's amazing to rescue all these animals who otherwise would have suffered a horrible fate," says Patrick Kwan (right), HSUS New York state director.